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50 CFR Ch. VI (10–1–98 Edition)

hL). The quota may be revised annually within the range of 17,000 and 100,000 Maine bushels (5,975 and 35,150 hL) following the procedures set forth in § 648.71.

(ii) All mahogany quahogs landed for sale in Maine by vessels issued a Maine mahogany quahog permit and not fishing for an individual allocation of ocean quahogs under § 648.70 shall be applied against the Maine mahogany quahog quota, regardless of where the mahogany quahogs are harvested.

(iii) All mahogany quahogs landed by vessels fishing in the Maine mahogany quahog zone for an individual allocation of quahogs under § 648.70 will be counted against the ocean quahog allocation for which the vessel is fishing.

(iv) The Regional Administrator will monitor the quota based on dealer reports and other available information and shall determine the date when the quota will be harvested. NMFS shall publish notification in the FEDERAL REGISTER advising the public that, effective upon a specific date, the Maine mahogany quahog quota has been harvested and notifying vessel and dealer permit holders that no Maine mahogany quahog quota is available for the remainder of the year.

(2) *Maine Mahogany Quahog Advisory Panel.* The Council shall establish a Maine Mahogany Quahog Advisory Panel consisting of representatives of harvesters, dealers, and the Maine Department of Marine Resources. The Advisory Panel shall make recommendations, through the Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog Committee of the Council, regarding revisions to the annual

quota and other management measures.

[63 FR 27485, May 19, 1998]

Subpart F—Management Measures for the NE Multispecies Fishery

§ 648.80 Regulated mesh areas and restrictions on gear and methods of fishing.

Except as provided in § 648.17, all vessels must comply with the following minimum mesh size, gear and methods of fishing requirements, unless otherwise exempted or prohibited:

(a) *Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank (GOM/GB) Regulated Mesh Area.*—(1) *Area definition.* The GOM/GB Regulated Mesh Area (copies of a map depicting the area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request) is that area:

(i) Bounded on the east by the U.S.-Canada maritime boundary, defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

GULF OF MAINE/GEORGES BANK REGULATED MESH AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
G1	(¹)	(¹)
G2	43°58'	67°22'
G3	42°53.1'	67°44.4'
G4	42°31'	67°28.1'
G5	41°18.6'	66°24.8'

¹The intersection of the shoreline and the U.S.-Canada Maritime Boundary.

(ii) Bounded on the south by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.	Approximate Ioran C bearings
G6	40°55.5'	66°38'	5930–Y–30750 and 9960–Y–43500.
G7	40°45.5'	68°00'	9960–Y–43500 and 68°00' W. lat.
G8	40°37'	68°00'	9960–Y–43450 and 68°00' W. lat.
G9	40°30'	69°00'	
NL3	40°22.7'	69°00'	
NL2	40°18.7'	69°40'	
NL1	40°50'	69°40'	
G11	40°50'	70°00'	
G12		170°00'	

¹Northward to its intersection with the shoreline of mainland Massachusetts.

(2) *Gear restrictions.* (i) *Minimum mesh size.* Except as provided in paragraphs (a)(2) (iii) and (i) of this section, and unless otherwise restricted under para-

graphs (a) (2)(ii) and (5) of this section, the minimum mesh size for any trawl net, sink gillnet, Scottish seine, midwater trawl, or purse seine on a

vessel or used by a vessel fishing under a DAS in the NE multispecies DAS program in the GOM/GB Regulated Mesh Area is 6-inch (15.24-cm) square or diamond mesh throughout the entire net. This restriction does not apply to nets or pieces of nets smaller than 3 ft (0.9 m) x 3 ft (0.9 m), (9 ft² (0.81 m²)), or to vessels that have not been issued a multispecies permit and that are fishing exclusively in state waters.

(ii) *Large-mesh vessels.* When fishing in the GOM/GB regulated mesh area, the minimum mesh size for any sink gillnet on a vessel or used by a vessel fishing under a DAS in the large-mesh DAS program specified in §648.82(b) (6) and (7) is 7-inch (17.78-cm) diamond mesh throughout the entire net. The minimum mesh size for any trawl net on a vessel or used by a vessel fishing under a DAS in the large-mesh DAS program is 8-inch (20.32-cm) diamond mesh throughout the entire net. This restriction does not apply to nets or pieces of nets smaller than 3 ft (0.9 m) x 3 ft (0.9 m), (9 ft² (0.81 m²)), or to vessels that have not been issued a multispecies permit and that are fishing exclusively in state waters.

(iii) *Other restrictions and exemptions.* Vessels are prohibited from fishing in the GOM/GB Regulated Mesh Area except if fishing with exempted gear (as defined under this part) or under the exemptions specified in paragraphs (a)(3), (a)(4), (a)(6), (a)(8) through (13), (d), (e), (h), and (i) of this section, if fishing under a NE multispecies DAS, if fishing under the small vessel exemption specified in §648.82(b)(3), if fishing under the scallop state waters exemptions specified in §648.54 and (a)(10) of this section, or if fishing pursuant to a NE multispecies open access Charter/Party or Handgear permit. Any gear on a vessel, or used by a vessel, in this area must be authorized under one of these exemptions or must be stowed as specified in §648.81(e).

(3) *Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area.* Vessels subject to the minimum mesh size restrictions specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may fish for, harvest, possess, or land northern shrimp in the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area with nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum size speci-

fied, if the vessel complies with the requirements of paragraphs (a)(3) (i) through (iii) of this section. The Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area is defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated (copies of a map depicting the area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request):

SMALL MESH NORTHERN SHRIMP FISHERY
EXEMPTION AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
SM1	41°35'	70°00'
SM2	41°35'	69°40'
SM3	42°49.5'	69°40'
SM4	43°12'	69°00'
SM5	43°41'	68°00'
G2	43°58'	67°22'; (the U.S.-Canada maritime Boundary).
G1	(¹)	(¹)

¹Northward along the irregular U.S.-Canada maritime boundary to the shoreline.

(i) *Restrictions on fishing for, possessing, or landing fish other than shrimp.* A vessel fishing in the northern shrimp fishery described in this section under this exemption may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than shrimp, except for the following, with the restrictions noted, as allowable bycatch species: Longhorn sculpin; silver hake—up to an amount equal to the total weight of shrimp landed; and American lobster—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board, or 200 lobsters (whichever is less).

(ii) *Requirement to use a finfish excluder device (FED).* A vessel must have a rigid or semi-rigid grate consisting of parallel bars of not more than 1-inch (2.54-cm) spacing that excludes all fish and other objects, except those that are small enough to pass between its bars into the codend of the trawl, secured in the trawl, forward of the codend, in such a manner that it precludes the passage of fish or other objects into the codend without the fish or objects having to first pass between the bars of the grate, in any net with mesh smaller than the minimum size specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section. The net must have a outlet or hole to allow fish or other objects that are too large to pass between the bars of the grate to exit out of the net. The aftermost edge of this outlet or hole must be at least as wide as the grate at

the point of attachment. The outlet or hole must extend forward from the grate toward the mouth of the net. A funnel of net material is allowed in the lengthening piece of the net forward of the grate to direct catch towards the grate. (Copies of a schematic example of a properly configured and installed FED are available from the Regional Administrator upon request.)

(iii) *Time restrictions.* A vessel may only fish under this exemption during the northern shrimp season, as established by the Commission and announced in the Commission's letter to participants.

(4) *Cultivator Shoal Whiting Fishery Exemption Area.* Vessels subject to the minimum mesh size restrictions specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may fish with, use, or possess nets in the Cultivator Shoal Whiting Fishery Exemption Area with a mesh size smaller than the minimum size specified, if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (a)(4)(i) of this section. The Cultivator Shoal Whiting Fishery Exemption Area (copies of a map depicting the area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request) is defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

CULTIVATOR SHOAL WHITING FISHERY
EXEMPTION AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
C1	42°10'	68°10'
C2	41°30'	68°41'
C4	41°30'	68°30'
C3	41°12.8'	68°30'
C4	41°05'	68°20'
C5	41°55'	67°40'
C1	42°10'	68°10'

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing in the Cultivator Shoal Whiting Fishery Exemption Area under this exemption must have a letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator on board and may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than whiting, except for the following, with the restrictions noted, as allowable incidental species: Herring; longhorn sculpin; squid; butterfish; mackerel; monkfish and monkfish parts, dogfish, and red hake—up to 10 percent each, by weight, of all other species on board; and American

lobster—up to 10 percent by weight of all other species on board or 200 lobsters, whichever is less.

(B) All nets must comply with a minimum mesh size of 3-inch (7.62 cm) square or diamond mesh applied to the first 160 meshes counted from the terminus of the net.

(C) Fishing is confined to a season of June 15 through October 31, unless otherwise specified by notification in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(D) When transiting through the GOM/GB Regulated Mesh Area specified under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, any nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section must be stowed in accordance with one of the methods specified in § 648.23(b).

(ii) *Sea sampling.* The Regional Administrator shall conduct periodic sea sampling to determine if there is a need to change the area or season designation, and to evaluate the bycatch of regulated species, especially haddock.

(iii) *Annual review.* The NEFMC shall conduct an annual review of data to determine if there are any changes in area or season designation necessary, and to make appropriate recommendations to the Regional Administrator following the procedures specified in § 648.90 of this part.

(5) *Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge (SB/JL) Juvenile Protection Area.* Except as provided in paragraphs (a)(3), (d), (e), and (h) of this section, the minimum mesh size for any trawl net, Scottish seine, purse seine, or midwater trawl in use, or available for immediate use as described in § 648.23(b), by a vessel fishing in the following area is 6-inch (15.24 cm) square mesh in the last 50 bars of the codend and extension piece for vessels 45 ft (13.7 m) in length and less and the last 100 bars of the codend and extension piece for vessels greater than 45 ft (13.7 m) in length.

(i) The SB/JL Juvenile Protection Area (copies of a chart depicting the area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request (see Table 1 to § 600.502)) is defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

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STELLWAGEN BANK JUVENILE PROTECTION AREA

Point	N. lat.	W. long.
SB1	42°34.0'	70°23.5'
SB2	42°28.8'	70°39.0'
SB3	42°18.6'	70°22.5'
SB4	42°05.5'	70°23.3'
SB5	42°11.0'	70°04.0'
SB6	42°15.0'	70°07.4'
SB7	42°15.0'	70°15.0'
SB8	42°24.0'	70°15.0'
SB1	42°34.0'	70°23.5'

JEFFREYS LEDGE JUVENILE PROTECTION AREA

Point	N. lat.	W. long.
JL1	42°52.0'	70°21.0'
JL2	42°41.5'	70°32.5'
JL3	42°34.0'	70°26.2'
JL4	42°43.1'	70°15.0'
JL5	42°54.3'	70°15.0'
JL1	42°52.0'	70°21.0'

(ii) Fishing for northern shrimp in the SB/JL Juvenile Protection Area is allowed, subject to the requirements of paragraph (a)(3) of this section.

(6) *Transiting.* (i) Vessels fishing in the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area and in Small Mesh Area 1/Small Mesh Area 2, as specified in paragraphs (a)(3) and (8) of this section, may transit through the SB/JL Juvenile Protection Area defined in paragraph (a)(5) of this section with nets on board that do not conform to the requirements specified in paragraph (a)(2) or (a)(5) of this section, provided that the nets are stowed in accordance with one of the methods specified in § 648.23(b).

(ii) Vessels subject to the minimum mesh size restrictions specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may transit through the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area defined in paragraph (a)(3) of this section with nets on board with a mesh size smaller than the minimum size specified, provided that the nets are stowed in accordance with one of the methods specified in § 648.23(b), and provided the vessel has no fish on board.

(iii) Vessels subject to the minimum mesh size restrictions specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may transit through the GOM/GB Regulated Mesh Area defined in paragraph (a)(1) of this section with nets on board with a mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified and with small mesh ex-

empted species on board, provided that the following conditions are met:

(A) All nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section are stowed in accordance with one of the methods specified in § 648.23(b).

(B) A letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator is on board.

(C) Vessels do not fish for, possess on board, or land any fish, except when fishing in the areas specified in paragraphs (a)(4), (a)(9), (b), and (c) of this section. Vessels may retain exempted small mesh species as provided in paragraphs (a)(4)(i), (a)(9)(i), (b)(3), and (c)(3) of this section.

(7) *Addition or deletion of exemptions.*

(i) An exemption may be added in an existing fishery for which there are sufficient data or information to ascertain the amount of regulated species bycatch, if the Regional Administrator, after consultation with the NEFMC, determines that the percentage of regulated species caught as bycatch is, or can be reduced to, less than 5 percent, by weight, of total catch and that such exemption will not jeopardize fishing mortality objectives. In determining whether exempting a fishery may jeopardize meeting fishing mortality objectives, the Regional Administrator may take into consideration factors such as, but not limited to, juvenile mortality. A fishery can be defined, restricted, or allowed by area, gear, season, or other means determined to be appropriate to reduce bycatch of regulated species. An existing exemption may be deleted or modified if the Regional Administrator determines that the catch of regulated species is equal to or greater than 5 percent, by weight, of total catch, or that continuing the exemption may jeopardize meeting fishing mortality objectives. Notification of additions, deletions or modifications will be made through issuance of a rule in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(ii) The NEFMC may recommend to the Regional Administrator, through the framework procedure specified in § 648.90(b), additions or deletions to exemptions for fisheries, either existing or proposed, for which there may be insufficient data or information for the Regional Administrator to determine,

without public comment, percentage catch of regulated species.

(iii) The Regional Administrator may, using the process described in either paragraph (a)(7)(i) or (ii) of this section, authorize an exemption for a white hake fishery by vessels using regulated mesh or hook gear. Determination of the percentage of regulated species caught in such fishery shall not include white hake.

(iv) Bycatch in exempted fisheries authorized under this paragraph (a)(7) are subject, at minimum, to the following restrictions:

(A) With the exception of fisheries authorized under paragraph (a)(7)(iii) of this section, a prohibition on the possession of regulated species.

(B) A limit on the possession of monkfish or monkfish parts of 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board.

(C) A limit on the possession of lobsters of 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board or 200 lobsters, whichever is less.

(D) A limit on the possession of skate or skate parts in the Southern New England regulated mesh area described in paragraph (b) of this section of 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board.

(8) *Small Mesh Area 1/Small Mesh Area 2.* (i) Vessels subject to the minimum mesh size restrictions specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may fish with or possess nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum size, provided the vessel complies with the requirements of paragraph (a)(8)(iv) or (a)(3)(ii) of this section, from July 15 through November 15 when fishing in Small Mesh Area 1 and from January 1 through June 30 when fishing in Small Mesh Area 2, except as specified in paragraph (a)(8)(ii) and (a)(8)(iii) of this section. A vessel may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than: Butterfish, dogfish, herring, mackerel, ocean pout, scup, squid, silver hake, and red hake, except for the following allowable incidental species (bycatch as the term is used elsewhere in this part), with the restrictions noted: Longhorn sculpin; monkfish and monkfish parts—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board; and American lobster—up to

10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board or 200 lobsters, whichever is less. These areas are defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated (copies of a chart depicting these areas are available from the Regional Administrator upon request (see Table 1 to §600.502)):

SMALL MESH AREA 1

Point	N. lat.	W. long.
SM1	43°03'	70°27'
SM2	42°57'	70°22'
SM3	42°47'	70°32'
SM4	42°45'	70°29'
SM5	42°43'	70°32'
SM6	42°44'	70°39'
SM7	42°49'	70°43'
SM8	42°50'	70°41'
SM9	42°53'	70°43'
SM10	42°55'	70°40'
SM11	42°59'	70°32'
SM1	43°03'	70°27'

SMALL MESH AREA 2

Point	N. lat.	W. long.
SM13	43°05.6'	69°55.0'
SM14	43°10.1'	69°43.3'
SM15	42°49.5'	69°40.0'
SM16	42°41.5'	69°40.0'
SM17	42°36.6'	69°55.0'
SM13	43°05.6'	69°55.0'

(ii) The portion of Small Mesh Area 2 that is north of 43°00.0' N. lat. shall be closed to all fishing during the period May 1 through May 31 to coincide with Inshore Closure Area I specified in §648.81(g)(1)(iii). Therefore, during the May 1 through May 31 time period, Small Mesh Area 2 is defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

SMALL MESH AREA 2

[May 1–May 31]

Point	N. lat.	W. long.
SM18	43°00.0'	69°41.6'
SM15	42°49.5'	69°40'
SM16	42°41.5'	69°40'
SM17	42°36.6'	69°55'
SM19	43°00.0'	69°55'
SM18	43°00.0'	69°41.6'

(iii) The portion of Small Mesh Area 2 that is south of 43°00.0' N. lat. shall be closed to all fishing during the period April 1 through April 30 to coincide with the Inshore Closure Area II specified in §648.81(g)(1)(ii). Therefore, during the April 1 through April 30 time

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period, Small Mesh Area 2 is defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

SMALL MESH AREA 2
[April 1–April 30]

Point	N. lat.	W. long.
SM18	43°00.0'	69°41.6'
SM14	43°10.1'	69°43.3'
SM13	43°05.6'	69°55'
SM19	43°00.0'	69°55'
SM18	43°00.0'	69°41.6'

(iv) *Raised footrope trawl.* Vessels fishing with trawl gear must configure it in such a way that, when towed, the gear is not in contact with the ocean bottom. Vessels are presumed to be fishing in such a manner if their trawl gear is designed as specified in paragraphs (a)(8)(iv) (A) through (D) of this section and is towed so that it does not come into contact with the ocean bottom:

(A) Eight inch (20.3 cm) diameter floats must be attached to the entire length of the headrope with a maximum spacing of 4 feet (12.2 cm) between floats;

(B) The ground gear must all be bare wire not larger than ½-inch (1.2 cm) for the top leg, not larger than ⅝-inch (1.6 cm) for the bottom leg, and not larger than ¾-inch (1.9 cm) for the ground cables. The top and bottom legs must be equal in length with no extensions. The total length of ground cables and legs must not be greater than 40 fathoms from the doors to wingends;

(C) The footrope must be at least 20 feet (6.1 m) longer than the length of the headrope; and

(D) The sweep must be rigged so it is behind and below the footrope, and the footrope is off the bottom. This is accomplished by having the sweep longer than the footrope and having long dropper chains attaching the sweep to the footrope at regular intervals. The forward end of the sweep and footrope must be connected to the bottom leg at the same point. This attachment, in conjunction with the headrope flotation, keeps the footrope off the bottom. The sweep and its rigging must be made entirely of 5/16 inch (0.8 cm) diameter bare chain. No wrapping or cookies are allowed on the chain. The total length of the sweep must be at

least 7 feet (2.1 m) longer than the total length of the footrope, or 3.5 feet (1.1 m) longer on each side. Drop chains must connect the footrope to the sweep chain, and the length of each drop chain must be at least 42 inches (106.7 cm). One drop chain must be hung from the center of the footrope to the center of the sweep, and one drop chain must be hung from each corner (the quarter or the junction of the bottom wing to the belly at the footrope). The attachment points of each drop chain on the sweep and the footrope must be the same distance from the center drop chain attachments. Drop chains must be hung at 8 foot (2.4 m) intervals from the corners toward the wing ends. The distance of the drop chain that is nearest the wing end to the end of the footrope may differ from net to net. However, the sweep must be at least 3.5 feet (1.1 m) longer than the footrope between the drop chain closest to the wing ends and the end of the sweep that attaches to the wing end.

(9) *Nantucket Shoals dogfish fishery exemption area.* Vessels subject to the minimum mesh size restrictions specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may fish with, use, or possess nets of mesh smaller than the minimum size specified in the Nantucket Shoals Dogfish Fishery Exemption Area, if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (a)(9)(i) of this section. The Nantucket Shoals Dogfish Fishery Exemption Area (copies of a map depicting this area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request) is defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

NANTUCKET SHOALS DOGFISH EXEMPTION AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
NS1	41°45'	70°00'
NS2	41°45'	69°20'
NS3	41°30'	69°20'
CI1	41°30'	69°23'
NS5	41°26.5'	69°20'
NS6	40°50'	69°20'
NS7	40°50'	70°00'
NS1	41°45'	70°00'

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing in the Nantucket Shoals Dogfish Fishery Exemption Area under the exemption must have on board a letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator and may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than dogfish, except as provided under paragraph (a)(9)(i)(D) of this section.

(B) Fishing is confined to June 1 through October 15.

(C) When transitting the GOM/GB regulated mesh area, specified under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, any nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified in paragraph (a)(2) of this section must be stowed and unavailable for immediate use in accordance with § 648.23(b).

(D) The following species may be retained, with the restrictions noted, as allowable bycatch species in the Nantucket Shoals Dogfish Fishery Exemption Area: Longhorn sculpin; silver hake—up to two standard totes; monkfish and monkfish parts—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board; American lobster—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board or 200 lobsters, whichever is less; and skate or skate parts—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board.

(E) A vessel fishing in the Nantucket Shoals Dogfish Fishery Exemption Area under the exemption must comply with any additional gear restrictions specified in the letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator.

(ii) *Sea sampling.* The Regional Administrator may conduct periodic sea sampling to determine if there is a need to change the area or season designation, and to evaluate the bycatch of regulated species.

(10) *Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption within the Gulf of Maine (GOM) Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area.* Vessels with a limited access scallop permit that have declared out of the DAS program as specified in § 648.10, or have used up their DAS allocations, and vessels issued a general scallop permit may fish in the GOM Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area when not under a NE multispecies DAS providing the vessel complies with the requirements speci-

fied in paragraph (a)(10)(i) of this section. The GOM Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption Area is equivalent to the area defined in paragraph (a)(3) of this section and designated as the Small Mesh Northern Shrimp Fishery Exemption Area.

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing in the GOM Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption Area specified in paragraph (a)(10) of this section, may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than Atlantic sea scallops.

(B) The combined dredge width in use by or in possession on board vessels fishing in the GOM Scallop Dredge Fishery Exemption Area shall not exceed 10.5 ft (3.2 m) measured at the widest point in the bail of the dredge.

(C) The exemption does not apply to areas closed to meet the Mid-coast closure fishery mortality reduction targets as specified in § 648.81(g).

(ii) [Reserved]

(11) *Nantucket Shoals Mussel and Sea Urchin Dredge Exemption Area.* A vessel may fish with a dredge in the Nantucket Shoals Mussel and Sea Urchin Dredge Exemption Area, provided that any dredge on board the vessel does not exceed 8 ft (2.44 m) measured at the widest point in the bail of the dredge, and the vessel does not fish for, harvest, possess, or land any species of fish other than mussels and sea urchins. The area coordinates of the Nantucket Shoals Mussel and Sea Urchin Dredge Exemption Area are the same coordinates as those of the Nantucket Shoals Dogfish Fishery Exemption Area specified under paragraph (a)(9) of this section.

(12) *GOM/GB Monkfish Gillnet Exemption.* A vessel may fish with gillnets in the GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area when not under a NE multispecies DAS if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (a)(12)(i) of this section. The GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area is defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

<i>N. Lat.</i>	<i>W. Long.</i>
41°35'	70°00'
42°49.5'	70°00'
42°49.5'	69°40'
43°12'	69°00'

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- (1) 69°00'
(1) due north to Maine shoreline.

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing under this exemption may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than monkfish, or lobsters in an amount not to exceed 10 percent by weight of the total catch on board, or 200 lobsters (whichever is less).

(B) All gillnets must have a minimum mesh size of 10 inches (25.4 cm) diamond mesh throughout the net.

(C) Fishing is confined to July 1 through September 14.

(13) *GOM/GB Dogfish Gillnet Exemption.* A vessel may fish with gillnets in the GOM/GB Dogfish and monkfish gillnet fishery exemption area when not under a NE multispecies DAS if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (a)(13)(i) of this section. The area coordinates of the GOM/GB Dogfish and Monkfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area are specified in paragraph (a)(11) of this section.

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing under this exemption may not fish for, possess on board, or land any species of fish other than dogfish, or lobsters in an amount not to exceed 10 percent by weight of the total catch on board, or 200 lobsters (whichever is less).

(B) All gillnets must have a minimum mesh size of 6.5 inches (16.5 cm) diamond mesh throughout the net.

(C) Fishing is confined to July 1 through August 31.

(b) *Southern New England (SNE) Regulated Mesh Area—(1) Area definition.* The SNE Regulated Mesh Area (copies of a map depicting this area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request) is that area:

(i) Bounded on the east by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND REGULATED MESH AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
G5	41°18.6'	66°24.8'
G6	40°55.5'	66°38'
G7	40°45.5'	68°00'
G8	40°37'	68°00'
G9	40°30.5'	69°00'
NL3	40°22.7'	69°00'
NL2	40°18.7'	69°40'
NL1	40°50'	69°40'
G11	40°50'	70°00'

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND REGULATED MESH AREA—Continued

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
G12		1 70°00'

¹ Northward to its intersection with the shoreline of mainland Massachusetts.

(ii) Bounded on the west by the eastern boundary of the Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Area.

(2) *Gear restrictions—(i) Minimum mesh size.* Except as provided in paragraphs (b)(2) (iii) and (i) of this section, and unless otherwise restricted under paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section, the minimum mesh size for any trawl net, sink gillnet, Scottish seine, purse seine or midwater trawl, not stowed and not unavailable in use or available for immediate use in accordance with §648.23(b) by a vessel fishing under a DAS in the multispecies DAS program in the SNE regulated mesh area, is 6-inch (15.24-cm) square or diamond mesh throughout the entire net. This restriction does not apply to vessels that have not been issued a multispecies permit and that are fishing exclusively in state waters.

(ii) *Large Mesh vessels.* When fishing in the SNE regulated mesh area, the minimum mesh size for any sink gillnet on a vessel, or used by a vessel, fishing under a DAS in the Large Mesh DAS program specified in §648.82(b) (6) and (7) is 7-inch (17.78-cm) diamond mesh throughout the entire net. The minimum mesh size for any trawl net on a vessel or used by a vessel fishing under a DAS in the Large Mesh DAS program is 8-inch (20.32-cm) diamond mesh throughout the entire net. This restriction does not apply to nets or pieces of nets smaller than 3 ft (0.9 m) x 3 ft (0.9 m), (9 ft² (0.81 m²)), or to vessels that have not been issued a multispecies permit and that are fishing exclusively in state waters.

(iii) *Other restrictions and exemptions.* Vessels are prohibited from fishing in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area except if fishing with exempted gear (as defined under this part) or under the exemptions specified in paragraphs (b)(3), (b)(5) through (8), (c), (e), (h), and (i) of this section, if fishing under a NE multispecies DAS, if fishing under the small vessel exemption specified in §648.82(b)(3), if fishing under the scallop

state waters exemption specified in §648.54, or if fishing pursuant to a NE multispecies open access Charter/Party or Handgear permit. Any gear on a vessel, or used by a vessel, in this area must be authorized under one of these exemptions or must be stowed as specified in §648.81(e).

(3) *Exemptions*—(i) *Species exemptions*. Vessels subject to the minimum mesh size restrictions specified in paragraph (b)(2) of this section may fish for, harvest, possess, or land butterfish, dogfish (trawl only), herring, mackerel, ocean pout, scup, shrimp, squid, summer flounder, silver hake, and weakfish with nets of a mesh size smaller than the minimum size specified in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area, provided such vessels comply with the requirements specified in paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section.

(ii) *Possession and net stowage requirements*. Vessels may possess regulated species while in possession of nets with mesh smaller than the minimum size specified in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section, provided that such nets are stowed and are not available for immediate use in accordance with §648.23(b), and provided that regulated species were not harvested by nets of mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section. Vessels fishing for the exempted species identified in paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section may also possess and retain the following species, with the restrictions noted, as incidental take to these exempted fisheries: Conger eels; searobins; black sea bass; red hake; tautog (blackfish); blowfish; cunner; John Dory; mullet; bluefish; tilefish; longhorn sculpin; fourspot flounder; alewife; hickory shad; American shad; blueback herring; sea ravens; Atlantic croaker; spot; swordfish; monkfish and monkfish parts—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board; American lobster—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board or 200 lobsters, whichever is less; and skate and skate parts—up to 10 percent, by weight, of all other species on board.

(4) *Addition or deletion of exemptions*. Same as paragraph (a)(7) of this section.

(5) *SNE Monkfish and Skate Trawl Exemption Area*. A vessel may fish with trawl gear in the SNE Monkfish and Skate Trawl Fishery Exemption Area when not operating under a NE multispecies DAS if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (b)(5)(i) of this section. The SNE Monkfish and Skate Trawl Fishery Exemption Area is defined as the area bounded on the north by a line extending eastward along 40°10' N. lat., and bounded on the west by the eastern boundary of the Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Area.

(i) *Requirements*. (A) A vessel fishing under this exemption may only fish for, possess on board, or land monkfish, skates, and the bycatch species and amounts specified in paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(B) All trawl nets must have a minimum mesh size of 8-inches (20.3-cm) square or diamond mesh throughout the codend for at least 45 continuous meshes forward of the terminus of the net.

(6) *SNE Monkfish and Skate Gillnet Exemption Area*. A vessel may fish with gillnet gear in the SNE Monkfish and Skate Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area when not operating under a NE multispecies DAS if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (b)(6)(i) of this section. The SNE Monkfish and Skate Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area is defined by a line running from the Massachusetts shoreline at 41°35' N. lat. and 70°00' W. long. south to its intersection with the outer boundary of the EEZ, southwesterly along the outer boundary of the EEZ, and bounded on the west by the eastern boundary of the Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Area.

(i) *Requirements*. (A) A vessel fishing under this exemption may only fish for, possess on board, or land monkfish, skates, and the bycatch species and amounts specified in paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(B) All gillnets must have a minimum mesh size of 10 inch (25.4 cm) diamond mesh throughout the net.

(C) All nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified in paragraph (b)(6)(i)(B) of this section must be stowed as specified in §648.81(e)(4).

(7) *SNE Dogfish Gillnet Exemption Area.* A gillnet vessel may fish in the SNE Dogfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area when not operating under a NE multispecies DAS if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (b)(7)(i) of this section. The SNE Dogfish Gillnet Fishery Exemption Area is defined by a line running from the Massachusetts shoreline at 41°35' N. lat. and 70°00' W. long. south to its intersection with the outer boundary of the EEZ, southwesterly along the outer boundary of the EEZ, and bounded on the west by the eastern boundary of the Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Area.

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing under this exemption may only fish for, possess on board, or land dogfish and the bycatch species and amounts specified in paragraph (b)(3) of this section.

(B) All gillnets must have a minimum mesh size of 6-inches (15.24-cm) diamond mesh throughout the net.

(C) Fishing is confined to May 1 through October 31.

(8) *SNE Mussel and Sea Urchin Dredge Exemption.* A vessel may fish with a dredge in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area, provided that any dredge on board the vessel does not exceed 8 ft (2.44 m) measured at the widest point in the bail of the dredge, and the vessel does not fish for, harvest, possess, or land any species of fish other than mussels and sea urchins.

(9) *SNE Little Tunny Gillnet Exemption Area.* A vessel may fish with gillnet gear in the SNE Little Tunny Gillnet Exemption Area when not operating under a NE multispecies DAS with mesh size smaller than the minimum required in the SNE Regulated Mesh Area, if the vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraph (b)(9)(i) of this section. The SNE Little Tunny Gillnet Exemption Area is defined by a line running from the Rhode Island shoreline at 41°18.2' N. lat. and 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill, RI) southwesterly through Fishers Island, NY; to Race Point, Fishers Island, NY; and from Race Point, Fishers Island, NY, southeasterly to 41°06.5' N. lat. and 71°50.2' W. long.; east northeast through Block Island, RI, to 41°15' N. lat. and 71°07' W. long.; then due north

to the intersection of the RI-MA shoreline.

(i) *Requirements.* (A) A vessel fishing under this exemption may fish only for, possess on board, or land little tunny and the allowable incidental species and amounts specified in paragraph (b)(3) and, if applicable, paragraph (b)(9)(i)(B) of this section. Vessels fishing under this exemption may not possess regulated species.

(B) A vessel may possess bonito as an allowable incidental species provided an exempted fishing permit is obtained from the Highly Migratory Species Division (HMS), Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, Gloucester, Massachusetts. The HMS reserves the authority to cap the number of participants who retain bonito as allowable incidental species should conservation and/or protected resource concerns develop.

(C) The vessel must have a letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator on board.

(D) All gillnets must have a minimum mesh size of 5.5 inch (13.97 cm) diamond mesh throughout the net.

(E) All nets with a mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified in paragraph (b)(9)(i)(D) of this section must be stowed in accordance with one of the methods described under §648.81(e) while fishing under this exemption.

(F) Fishing is confined to September 1 through October 31.

(ii) The Regional Administrator shall conduct periodic sea sampling to evaluate the likelihood of gear interactions with protected resources.

(c) *Mid-Atlantic regulated mesh area.*

(i) *Area definition.* The Mid-Atlantic Regulated Mesh Area is that area bounded on the east by a line running from the Rhode Island shoreline at 41°18.2' N. lat. and 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill, RI) southwesterly through Fishers Island, NY, to Race Point, Fishers Island, NY, and from Race Point, Fishers Island, NY, southeasterly to the intersection of the 3-nautical mile line east of Montauk Point, southwesterly along the 3-nautical mile line to the intersection of 72°30' W. long. and south along that line to the intersection of the outer boundary of the EEZ.

(2) *Gear restrictions*—(i) *Minimum mesh size*. Except as provided in paragraph (i) of this section, and unless otherwise restricted under paragraph (c)(2)(ii) of this section, the minimum mesh size for any trawl net, sink gillnet, Scottish seine, purse seine, or midwater trawl in use or available for immediate use, as described in §648.23(b), by a vessel fishing under a DAS in the NE multispecies DAS program in the MA Regulated Mesh Area shall be that specified by §648.104(a). This restriction does not apply to vessels that have not been issued a NE multispecies permit and that are fishing exclusively in state waters.

(ii) *Large mesh vessels*. When fishing in the MA Regulated Mesh Area, the minimum mesh size for any sink gillnet on a vessel, or used by a vessel, fishing under a DAS in the Large Mesh DAS program specified in §648.82(b) (6) and (7) is 7-inch (17.78-cm) diamond mesh throughout the entire net. The minimum mesh size for any trawl net on a vessel, or used by a vessel, fishing under a DAS in the Large Mesh DAS program is 8-inch (20.32-cm) diamond mesh throughout the net. This restriction does not apply to nets or pieces of nets smaller than 3 ft (0.9 m) x 3 ft (0.9 m), (9 ft² (0.81 m²)), or to vessels that have not been issued a multispecies permit and that are fishing exclusively in state waters.

(3) *Net stowage exemption*. Vessels may possess regulated species while in possession of nets with mesh smaller than the minimum size specified in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section, provided that such nets are stowed and are not available for immediate use in accordance with §648.23(b), and provided that regulated species were not harvested by nets of mesh size smaller than the minimum mesh size specified in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section.

(4) *Additional exemptions*. The Regional Administrator may, using the process described in either paragraph (a)(7) (i) or (ii) of this section, authorize an exemption for a white hake fishery by vessels using regulated mesh or hook gear. Determination of the percentage of regulated species caught in such a fishery shall not include white hake.

(d) *Midwater trawl gear exemption*. Fishing may take place throughout the fishing year with midwater trawl gear of mesh size less than the applicable minimum size specified in this section, provided that:

(1) Midwater trawl gear is used exclusively;

(2) When fishing under this exemption in the GOM/GB and SB/JL Areas, and in the area described in §648.81(c)(1), the vessel has on board a letter of authorization issued by the Regional Administrator, and complies with all restrictions and conditions thereof;

(3) The vessel only fishes for, possesses, or lands Atlantic herring, blueback herring, or mackerel in areas north of 42°20' N. lat. and in the areas described in §648.81(a)(1), (b)(1), and (c)(1); and Atlantic herring, blueback herring, mackerel, or squid in all other areas south of 42°20' N. lat.; and

(4) The vessel does not fish for, possess, or land NE multispecies.

(5) The vessel must carry a NMFS-approved sea sampler/observer, if requested by the Regional Administrator.

(e) *Purse seine gear exemption*. Fishing may take place throughout the fishing year with purse seine gear of mesh size smaller than the applicable minimum size specified in this section, provided that:

(1) The vessel uses purse seine gear exclusively;

(2) When fishing under this exemption in the GOM/GB and SB/JL areas, the vessel has on board an authorizing letter issued by the Regional Administrator;

(3) The vessel only fishes for, possesses, or lands Atlantic herring, blueback herring, mackerel, or menhaden; and

(4) The vessel does not fish for, possess, or land NE multispecies.

(f) *Mesh measurements*—(1) *Gillnets*. Beginning October 15, 1996, mesh size of gillnet gear shall be measured by lining up five consecutive knots perpendicular to the float line and, with a ruler or tape measure, measuring ten consecutive measures on the diamond, inside knot to inside knot. The mesh shall be the average of the measurements of ten consecutive measures.

(2) *All other nets.* With the exception of gillnets, mesh size shall be measured by a wedged-shaped gauge having a taper of 2 cm in 8 cm and a thickness of 2.3 mm, inserted into the meshes under a pressure or pull of 5 kg.

(i) *Square-mesh measurement.* Square mesh in the regulated portion of the net is measured by placing the net gauge along the diagonal line that connects the largest opening between opposite corners of the square. The square mesh size is the average of the measurements of 20 consecutive adjacent meshes from the terminus forward along the long axis of the net. The square mesh is measured at least five meshes away from the lacings of the net.

(ii) *Diamond-mesh measurement.* Diamond mesh in the regulated portion of the net is measured running parallel to the long axis of the net. The mesh size is the average of the measurements of any series of 20 consecutive meshes. The mesh is measured at least five meshes away from the lacings of the net.

(g) *Restrictions on gear and methods of fishing—(1) Net obstruction or constriction.* A fishing vessel shall not use any device or material, including, but not limited to, nets, net strengtheners, ropes, lines, or chafing gear, on the top of a trawl net, except that one splitting strap and one bull rope (if present), consisting of line and rope no more than 3 inches (7.62 cm) in diameter, may be used if such splitting strap and/or bull rope does not constrict in any manner the top of the trawl net. "The top of the trawl net" means the 50 percent of the net that (in a hypothetical situation) would not be in contact with the ocean bottom during a tow if the net were laid flat on the ocean floor. For the purpose of this paragraph (g)(1), head ropes are not considered part of the top of the trawl net.

(2) *Mesh obstruction or constriction.* (i) A fishing vessel may not use any mesh configuration, mesh construction, or other means on or in the top of the net, as defined in paragraph (g)(1) of this section, if it obstructs the meshes of the net in any manner.

(ii) A fishing vessel may not use a net capable of catching multispecies if the

bars entering or exiting the knots twist around each other.

(3) *Pair trawl prohibition.* No vessel may fish for NE multispecies while pair trawling, or possess or land NE multispecies that have been harvested by means of pair trawling.

(h) *Scallop vessels.* (1) Except as provided in paragraph (h)(2) of this section, a scallop vessel that possesses a limited access scallop permit and either a multispecies combination vessel permit or a scallop multispecies possession limit permit, and that is fishing under a scallop DAS allocated under § 648.53, may possess and land up to 300 lb (136.1 kg) of regulated species, provided it has at least one standard tote on board, unless otherwise restricted by § 648.86(a)(2).

(2) Combination vessels fishing under a NE multispecies DAS are subject to the gear restrictions specified in § 648.80 and may possess and land unlimited amounts of regulated species. Such vessels may simultaneously fish under a scallop DAS.

(i) *State waters winter flounder exemption.* Any vessel issued a multispecies permit may fish for, possess, or land winter flounder while fishing with nets of mesh smaller than the minimum size specified in paragraphs (a)(2), (b)(2), and (c)(2) of this section, provided that:

(1) The vessel has on board a certificate approved by the Regional Administrator and issued by the state agency authorizing the vessel's participation in the state's winter flounder fishing program and is in compliance with the applicable state laws pertaining to minimum mesh size for winter flounder.

(2) Fishing is conducted exclusively in the waters of the state from which the certificate was obtained.

(3) The state's winter flounder plan has been approved by the Commission as being in compliance with the Commission's winter flounder fishery management plan.

(4) The state elects, by a letter to the Regional Administrator, to participate in the exemption program described by this section.

(5) The vessel does not enter or transit the EEZ.

(6) The vessel does not enter or transit the waters of another state, unless

such other state is participating in the exemption program described by this section and the vessel is enrolled in that state's program.

(7) The vessel, when not fishing under the DAS program, does not fish for, possess, or land more than 500 lb (226.8 kg) of winter flounder, and has at least one standard tote on board.

(8) The vessel does not fish for, possess, or land any species of fish other than winter flounder and the exempted small mesh species specified under paragraphs (a)(3)(i), (a)(8)(iii), (b)(3), and (c)(3) of this section when fishing in the areas specified under paragraphs (a)(3), (a)(8), (b)(1), and (c)(1) of this section, respectively. Vessels fishing under this exemption in New York and Connecticut state waters may also possess and retain skate as incidental take in this fishery.

(9) The vessel complies with all other applicable requirements.

[61 FR 34968, July 3, 1996, as amended at 61 FR 54106, Oct. 17, 1996; 61 FR 55777, Oct. 29, 1996; 61 FR 68165, Dec. 27, 1996; 62 FR 8406, Feb. 25, 1997; 62 FR 14649, Mar. 27, 1997; 62 FR 15387, Apr. 1, 1997; 62 FR 49149, Sept. 19, 1997; 63 FR 7730, Feb. 17, 1998; 63 FR 11595, Mar. 10, 1998; 63 FR 15330, Mar. 31, 1998; 63 FR 25416, May 8, 1998; 63 FR 40377, July 29, 1998; 63 FR 42592, Aug. 10, 1998; 63 FR 45966, Aug. 28, 1998]

§ 648.81 Closed areas.

(a) *Closed Area I.* (1) No fishing vessel or person on a fishing vessel may enter, fish, or be in the area known as Closed Area I (copies of a map depicting this area are available from the Regional Administrator upon request), as defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated, except as specified in paragraphs (a)(2) and (d) of this section:

CLOSED AREA I		
Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
C11	41°30'	69°23'
C12	40°45'	68°45'
C13	40°45'	68°30'
C14	41°30'	68°30'
C11	41°30'	69°23'

(2) Paragraph (a)(1) of this section does not apply to persons on fishing vessels or fishing vessels—

(i) Fishing with or using pot gear designed and used to take lobsters, or pot gear designed and used to take hagfish,

provided that there is no retention of regulated species and no other gear on board capable of catching NE multispecies; or

(ii) Fishing with or using pelagic hook or longline gear or harpoon gear, provided that there is no retention of regulated species, and provided that there is no other gear on board capable of catching NE multispecies; or

(iii) Fishing with pelagic midwater trawl gear, consistent with § 648.80(d), provided that the Regional Administrator shall review information pertaining to the bycatch of regulated multispecies, and, if the Regional Administrator determines, on the basis of sea sampling data or other credible information for this fishery, that the bycatch of regulated multispecies exceeds, or is likely to exceed, 1 percent of herring and mackerel harvested, by weight, in the fishery or by any individual fishing operation, the Regional Administrator may place restrictions and conditions in the letter of authorization for any or all individual fishing operations or, after consulting with the Council, suspend or prohibit any or all midwater trawl activities in the closed areas.

(b) *Closed Area II.* (1) No fishing vessel or person on a fishing vessel may enter, fish, or be in the area known as Closed Area II (copies of a map depicting this area is available from the Regional Administrator upon request), as defined by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated, except as specified in paragraph (b)(2) of this section:

CLOSED AREA II		
Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
C11	41°00'	67°20'
C12	41°00'	66°35.8'
G5	41°18.6'	66°24.8' (the U.S.-Canada Maritime Boundary)
C13	42°22'	67°20' (the U.S.-Canada Maritime Boundary)
C11	41°00'	67°20'

(2) Paragraph (b)(1) of this section does not apply to persons on fishing vessels or fishing vessels fishing with gears as described in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, or that are transiting the area provided—